

VZCZCXRO2082
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1355/01 1451044
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 251044Z MAY 09 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3178
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001355

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/23/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON ANTI-CORRUPTION DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1235 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1308

[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 828 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: ACCO Joseph Stafford, reason 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) In addition to rhetoric, Prime Minister Al-Maliki has taken a few concrete steps of late on the anti-corruption dossier, but more and larger steps are needed. After questioning the Trade Minister on corruption allegations, the Council of Representatives now reportedly plans to question the Oil and Electricity Ministers. We are told that the GOI's anti-bribery campaign, originally announced in March, is now scheduled to begin June 1 and will initially focus on offices in the Finance, Interior, and Justice Ministries.
END SUMMARY

PRIME MINISTER CONTINUES TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST CORRUPTION

[1](#)2. (U) The GOI's commitment to tackle corruption remains a prominent theme in PM Nouri Al-Maliki's statements of late (see ref a for previous statements). In a May 22 speech marking the third anniversary of his government's establishment, Al-Maliki highlighted what he saw as the GOI's major achievements and included efforts against corruption among them. He stated, "during the past three years, the government has continued to combat corruption ... although it has been preoccupied with security challenges." Stressing his ongoing commitment to the anti-corruption cause, Al-Maliki [90Q/5\\$*QQj%9%MQQIQ](#)Husayn Al-Shahristani would be among those asked to appear, asserting, "there is proof of administrative and financial corruption inside the Oil Ministry, and this evidence will be presented during Al-Shahristani's questioning." Corroborating media reports that Electricity Minister Karim Al-Hassan would [Q](#)media reports that Electricity Minister Karim Al-Hassan would also be questioned, COR member Mudhir Hussein Al-Hakim was quoted as saying on May 22, " the Parliament has begun gathering evidence to use in questioning Iraq's Electricity Minister about corruption in his Ministry, the failure to provide citizens electricity...."

[1](#)5. (C) As for the embattled Trade Minister, a British citizen who is reportedly now in London, there are media reports that his resignation is imminent, although the COR Integrity Committee Chairman, Sheikh Sabah Al-Saidi, is continuing his efforts to obtain support within the COR for a vote on a "withdrawal of confidence" measure that, if passed by an absolute majority, would result in the Trade Minister's removal. (COMMENT: While sources had previously indicated that the Prime Minister would prevent the Trade Minister's removal and keep him in the cabinet, rumors are now circulating that he will be replaced if the cabinet reshuffle mentioned by Al-Maliki materializes. END COMMENT)

BAGHDAD 00001355 002 OF 002

UPDATE ON ANTI-BRIBERY CAMPAIGN

¶16. (SBU) On March 1, Council of Ministers Secretary General Ali Alaq announced the GOI's intention to mount a campaign against bribery (ref c). In the interim, preparations have continued, with Alaq and officials with the Commission on Integrity and Inspectors General corps holding a series of planning meetings. According to our contacts, the campaign is now scheduled to kick off around June 1 and will focus initially on three ministries: Finance (offices handling taxes and retirement system for government employees), Interior (office issuing passports and other documents), and Justice (offices handling property deeds and notary functions). We were told that these offices were selected because their employees were considered especially vulnerable to bribery. (NOTE: These were among GOI offices recently covered in a survey conducted by the COI; of 1,000 Baghdad citizens queried in the survey, 36 percent stated that they had paid bribes to obtain the documents and other services provided by the offices.) Reportedly, under the campaign, teams led by the respective Ministries' Inspectors General would place the offices under intensified scrutiny so as to uncover evidence of abuse but also to come up with suggestions for overhauling their operations so as to reduce opportunities for bribe-taking.

¶17. (SBU) On May 18, Secretary General Alaq along with COI head Judge Raheem Al-Ugaili and several Inspectors General met with local media representatives to promote their awareness and support for the campaign. Anti-Corruption Coordinator and staff (ACCO) attended the event, which featured sharp exchanges between the speakers and several journalists. The latter criticized the GOI's anti-corruption efforts to date as inadequate and expressed doubt as to the effectiveness of the anti-bribery initiative.

COMMENT

¶18. (C) It remains to be seen whether the GOI's anti-bribery campaign will produce much in the way of results, i.e. prosecutions of GOI officials for abuses and concrete reforms in the operations of the three ministries involved in the initial phase. The skepticism evinced by journalists over the campaign is doubtless widely shared by the public at large. That the campaign is confined to only three ministries in the initial phase suggests that the GOI's own expectations for this initiative are modest. END COMMENT
HILL